

Currently few American high schools offer Chinese language programs. In the 10th District, my alma mater, New Trier High School is leading this effort. Starting in 1998 with only 39 students, the program has expanded to over 120 students. Next year 175 students will be studying Chinese at NTHS.

Today, I joined with Consul General Xu Jinzhong to lead a panel discussion on the economic and social importance of growing Chinese language programs in American schools. University administrators, high school faculty and business leaders shared their insight.

Fresh from President Hu Jintao's visit to Washington, Consul General Xu and I shared our perspectives with 100 NTHS students on the need for strong U.S.-China relations. We conveyed a similar message: Chinese language programs and cultural education will put these students at the forefront of America's next generation of leaders.

We now must connect the booming demand for Chinese programs with an adequate supply of teachers, educational tools and exchange programs. This week, I will introduce the U.S.-China Engagement Act which will expand access to Chinese programs, upgrade our diplomatic infrastructure in China and connect small and medium sized businesses with the thriving Chinese market.







